Towards a Semantic Web. A comparison between RDA and REICAT descriptive solutions

Simone Forassiepi

1 Introduction

Making data fully interoperable in the semantic web is the greatest challenge that libraries are currently facing. The transition from rigidly structured record on proprietary formats and their diffusion only in the library field to linked open data, interconnected with the rest of the web, represents a radical transformation in the organization of cataloguing information.

In order to do this, libraries must build their structured data on logical entities clearly defined and globally shared, in order to facilitate the construction of semantic ontologies which could be used even in areas outside the original domains.

The creation of an ontological map of the bibliographic world is the first step to take to create a community library that could interact with the web through a mutual exchange of data. In order to begin an alignment process among logical entities produced by RDA drafters (RDA 2010) and those at the core of the new consolidated edition of the ISBD (International Federation Of Library Associations and Institutions 2011), in November 2011, a meeting was held in Glasgow for the harmonization of data among the ISBD Review Group, the ISSN Network and RDA Joint Steering Committee. This

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meeting produced a table of comparison[1] whose main purpose is to be the first step towards full interoperability between the two texts.

Starting from the structure of the ISBD areas, in this paper the priority is to show how the logical entities described in REICAT, chapter four (Commissione permanente per la revisione delle regole italiane di catalogazione and Istituto centrale per il catalogo unico delle biblioteche italiane e per le informazioni bibliografiche 2009), could be collocated in this alignment process. In the following pages, we will compare the textual architectures, the basic logical entities of RDA, the ISBD consolidated edition and REICAT with one another, analysing the similarities and the differences, to try to understand whether from the new Italian cataloguing rules could emerge a cataloguing structure fully operational in a semantic environment.

2 Area 0

The ISBD area 0 is devoted to the GMD, General Material Designation. This new area identifies the described resource's product group, defining a documentary macro-category for the identification of the typology of the resource. These data, which has been present in the ISBD from 1977, have entered in the ISBD schema for the first time with the ISBD Consolidated edition. After a temporary collocation in area 1, the GMD have been systematized in the new area 0.

The area is divided into two sections: *content form* and *media type*. The former defines the resource expressive form, «form or forms in which the content of a resource is expressed » (ISBD. 0.1), while the latter, devoted to the *media type*, is for entering «the type or types of carrier used to convey the content of the resource» (ISBD. 0.2). For both sections there is a list of controlled terms to be used.

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[1] Alignment of the ISBD element set with RDA element set – RDA, Appendix D.1. URL: http://www.rda-jsc.org/2011jscisbdissnoutcomes.html.

The need to put in a "zero" position the instructions about the material form of the resource arises as a result of an ever-increasing amount of non-textual resources appearing in the collections described by the ISBD. In a semantic environment, where the metadata produced by libraries happen to be linked to data coming from different domains, the designation of the material becomes a key element for the resources identification.

Regarding content form and media type, the RDA Joint Steering Committee decided to separate the information in two different portions of the text,[2] devoting chapter 3 (Describing carriers) to the *media type*, and the paragraph 6, 9 (Content type) to the *content form*. This relocation implies a deep conceptual modification. The content form analysis is not any longer connected to manifestation but it is dealt within the chapter devoted to works and expressions. The reason for this relocation is the willingness to build a catalogue structure based on the four different typologies of the resource inspired by FRBR (IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records et al. 1998).

The RDA architecture aims at increasing interoperability with data produced in domains external to the libraries. In this way the cataloguer analysis is extended to resources that are not always based on the typical bibliographic quadripartite structure. Finally, we want to emphasize that RDA drafters "explode" the record structure typically identified by the ISBD, by changing the sequence of the elements. At the base of this choice there is a focus change, the attention of the text is no longer focused on the information structure, but on the individual data. In this perspective, the sequence of the areas, a key element for the ISBD world, loses his

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[2] RDA has 37 chapters divided into 10 sections. The first two are devoted respectively to the *Recording attributes of manifestation and item* and to the *Recording attributes of works and expressions*.

centrality and the visual organization of data becomes a simple layout choice made by the user.

In the Italian rules, the GMD does not find an autonomous space, unlike the great relevance reserved to it in the other two texts, and it has been relegated to search filter: «the general material designation3 is not covered by these rules as part of the bibliographic description. It is considered more appropriate to record it separately, usually in coded form, in order to display it according to the procedure and in the most convenient position, as well as possible filter for the search» (REICAT, 4.1.0.1, footnote 1). This choice meets the specific practice of the Italian libraries, still strongly focused on the cataloguing of the print resources, but it is lacking in the theoretical aspect and in the prospect of a cataloguing functional to new semantic platforms[4].

3 Area 1

Compared to the past, in Area 1 there is a radical lexical change made by the ISBD. The standard changes its focus, with regard to the statement of responsibility from the term author to the act of creation, «a statement of responsibility consists of one or more names, phrases, or groups of characters relating to the identification and/or function of any persons or corporate bodies responsible for or contributing to the creation or realisation of the intellectual or artistic content of a work contained in the resource described» (ISBD., 1.4). This definition leads to the use of the term *creator* instead of *author*, a term rarefied in a list of figures (Group and Committee 2011, chap. 1.4.2) and it is unchanged in RDA. Regarding REICAT, the term *creator* does not appear anywhere in the text, but the meaning given

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[3] As for the adjective that qualifies the GMD, departing from the old translations and from the REICAT choices for the Italian translation of the ISBD consolidated edition is selected to use the term *generale (general)*.

[4] «The rules are based on the needs of a detailed, rigorous and uniform cataloging that characterize the catalogs of library systems or cooperation networks and those of large libraries» (REICAT 0.1.4 A).

to *statement of responsibility* is very close, «by statement of responsibility we mean a name or an expression that indicates persons or entities that have a relationship of responsibility with the published works or their expressions, or function they perform» (REICAT, 4.1.3.0). The slip from the concept of *author* to that of *creator* has resulted an extension of the concept of *responsibility*[5] in the three texts, especially in the field of audio-visual resources that often see the efforts of several individuals. The *creator* concept results, compared with that of *author*, closely connected to work and expression level rather than manifestation. Furthermore if the changes appear minimal in a descriptive level, the same cannot be said on the conceptual. The *creator* figure is connected to all those personalities who play a creative role in the definition of a resource, and not anymore at the single *author*. The choice of REICAT to not ever refer to the concept of *creation* is muddled and disconnected from the international context. Also clearly demonstrates the lack of propensity to create ontologically well-defined elements, the first step towards a construction of a semantic interface.

Regarding the textual architecture, RDA has chosen to divide the area into two parts 1: Title (2.3) and Statement of Responsibility (2.4).[6] This decision once again demonstrates the perspective shift made by RDA with the change from a focus centred to the record to a data centrality. This split is based on the need to divide the elements in order to better identify the individual entity to be marked. Title and Author have been included in the same area since the first edition of the ISBD as they are considered the most significant elements for the identification of a resource. RDA breaks

[5] The Italian choice is complex, because the use of the entity *creator* would have been a logical simplification compared to the use of a *statement of responsibility*. It also appears the lack of interest towards the creation of ontologically-defined terms usable in a semantic structure.

[6] The second chapter of the RDA, dedicated to the *description of the Manifestation and Item*, broadly reflects the structure of ISBD areas and when this does not occur implies a conceptual shift.

this habit. The use of an XML metalanguage provides that each data should be "atomized" in order to be well defined and used in a semantic architecture.

Area 2

This ISBD section is strictly connected to hardcopy resources. For this reason, the differences among RDA, REICAT and the ISBD are minimal. This area is based mainly on information available in books. Therefore, this area is less subject to a data exchange with areas external to the libraries. As a consequence, there is no deep conceptual difference among the three codes, which do not show the usual differences emerging from the greater or lesser openness towards resources external to libraries.

Area 3

The third ISBD area is restricted to *cartographic resources*, *notated music* and *serials*. In the consolidated edition, the fourth resource, that was traditionally part of the Area 3, the electronic resources, has been placed elsewhere. Area 3 examines the mode of presentation of the characteristic data, observing mathematical data for cartographic resources (scale, projection, coordinates and equinox), musical format statement for notated music (as score, musical arrangement, etc…) and numbering related to serials.

REICAT drafters follow closely, in this portion of the text, the ISBD structure, with the only difference represented by the fact that firstly REICAT deals with notated music and secondly with cartographic resources.

Regarding RDA, even in this case, the text drafters decided to "blast" the area, as they did for area 0. The serials are being discussed in the second chapter, paragraph 2.6 *Numbering of Serials*, while data related to cartographic resources and to notated music are collocated in the portion of the text devoted to works and expressions (RDA 7.4

Coordinates of cartographic content, 7.5 Equinox, 7.6 Epoch, 7.20 Format of notated music).

As for the analysis of the elements present in this area, a deep difference can be noted between the ISBD and RDA. There are two completely different views of the serials in the two texts. According to RDA drafters, the serials are split and identified in their basic elements (the singles numbers), while, in the ISBD (3.3.2 and 3.3.3) and in REICAT (4.3.C.1.0), the series are identified and reported by the first number of the collection and by the last one. In this way, all the collection is perceived as a unique entity. From this structure derive two different cataloguing processes that are considered as one of the most peculiar differences between RDA and the ISBD, and likewise between RDA and REICAT.

This different treatment once again emphasizes the willingness of data atomization carried out by RDA drafters, in order to make the singles numbers individually indexed. On the contrary, the creation of a range of numbers, referred to a series, makes it impossible to search internally for individual numbers.

Area 4

The forth area aims at covering «all types of publication, production, distribution, issuing and release activities connected with resources» (ISBD. 4. Introductory note), and data related to manufacturing. Regarding this area, it is to be pointed out an important fracture between the ISBD and REICAT on one hand, and RDA on the other.

If in the two former texts the concepts of *publication, production, print and manufacture* are gathered in one section of the text, in RDA the drafters decided to assign a paragraph to each figure. Accordingly, RDA emphasizes the difference among the figures of publisher, producer, distributor and printer.

Such a specific subdivision of the roles within the production process is oriented towards the elements atomization, which in this way they

can undergo a process of autonomous tagging. Each element is thereby identified as a "quid" in its own right, in which the punctuation and the quotation order (ISBD cornerstone) loses importance, becoming simple elements of a layout changeable at user discretion. The catalogue is focused, once again, on the data and not on the record. It is the single informative element that will be analysed and structured, not the record structure.

The RDA main goal is to establish a unique set of entities individually marked with a specific URI. It is no longer the area context to define the role of a term but it is the same term that defines itself through its own autonomous tag. This paradigm shift is central to the creation of an ontological grammar of the cataloguing world, the first step towards the loss of the catalogue form in favour of a data cloud structure.

Focusing on two paradigmatic choices made by RDA and REICAT drafters, with regard to the area 4, can help us to understand the different perspectives in the information organization offered by the two codes. RDA distinguish themselves among the examined texts since they include the concept of *parallel place of manufacture*, among the analysed entities. This shows a willingness to cover all the possible options with the purpose of a complete tagging. On the other hand, REICAT are the only text in which the *place of printing* and the *name of the printer* are dealt with together in a single chapter. Although the same ISBD cataloguing choices are made, from the Italian text emerges a more interesting perspective to identify the resource properties and to build a record as complete as possible. On the contrary, RDA loses interest in the record construction and it turns to the unambiguous data marking.

The second element used for showing the differences between RDA and REICAT is found in the following statement of the Italian rules «as editor means the responsible for the publication of the issue. It may be a commercial editor, a public or private entity of any nature, a person, or more institutions or persons presented as responsible for

the publication, regardless of the functions actually performed» (REICAT 4.4.2.0). At first sight, this definition given by REICAT is very accurate and not too far from that provided by RDA (2.7.4). The distance between the two texts emerges when in REICAT is pointed out that in the entity of the *publisher* «are included distributors, booksellers and other figures that appear in relationship with the purchasers, the diffusions or published commercialization» (REICAT 4.4.2.0). As a consequence, the diversity of the roles in the process of production and distribution of a resource is lost, while in RDA autonomous chapters are found for each entity. On the other hand, the roles are defined better in the ISBD than in REICAT, but they are contained in a single entity: «The name of the person or corporate body appearing on the resource that effects respectively the publication, production and/or distribution or release activities for the resource» (ISBD. 4.2). Between the ISBD and REICAT on the one hand and RDA on the other emerges a radical split, as *Resource Description and Access* clearly distinguishes the different figures and creates individual definitions for *producers* (RDA 2.7.4), *publishers* (RDA 2.8.4) and *distributor* (RDA 2.9.4). The RDA main goal is once again the identification of a single information, in the perspective of the creation of a linked data network, and that is how it clearly distinguish itself from the other two texts.

Area 5

The area 5 is the ISBD section based on the material description and includes «the extent, other physical details, the dimensions, and the accompanying material statement» (ISBD. 5. Introductory note). Due to the variety of analysable resources, this area has a great importance and clarifies the codes perspectives as far as the future interests are concerned.

In the section of the text devoted to the description of the material, the ISBD and REICAT have overlapping structures and even the discussed entities are ontologically very close. The first part of the

area is devoted to the *specific material designation* (SMD) and to the *extent*. Then there are the recommendations about *other physical details* and *dimensions*. Finally, both texts end by dealing with *accompanying material statement*.

RDA is detached from this pattern, devoting a separate chapter to the material description, the third one, *Describing Carriers*. It was decided by the drafters not to include the material description in the paragraphs sequence of the second chapter devoted to the identification of Manifestation and Item and abandon the parallelism with the ISBD areas just to express the importance of the element.[7] The use of the rules on platforms used outside the library domains makes the material description, along with the GMD, an element of primary importance. RDA drafters, being more inclined to open towards new fields, build a much more precise text in the specification of the material description, so that in the text appears a division among *base material*, *applied material* and *mount material*.

An element of particular importance, to show the three texts different perspectives in the discussion about the elements of the fifth area is the behaviour of the rules towards the fixed and moving images. The ISBD, debating the issue of colour, points out a single choice between colour and black and white. In REICAT the choice is extended to another "colour" possibility, the *sepia*, and with the chance to mention the system of colour reproduction, e.g. Technicolor (REICAT 4.5.4.5 B). RDA proves to be, once again, like the most adjustable rules, as they speak explicitly of «presence of colours, tones, etc…» and from the examples it draws a complete freedom to define the colour treatment.

RDA remarkable peculiarity to work with a great amount of resources is also evident at paragraph 3.16.2, where, as far as the *recording method* is concerned, the rules refer clearly to *digital*, while

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[7] Chapter 3 is in the first section of the text.

for the ISBD and REICAT this option is not mentioned. To stay on topic of *Technical Characteristics of the sound recordings*, the Italian rules dedicate to the theme only one paragraph, the 4.5.2.6., not focusing on the various technical specifications, as both the ISBD and RDA do, which qualify, despite slight differences between them: *Groove direction, Groove size, Number of tape tracks, track configuration, number of sound channels, Equalization* and *Noise reduction*.

Unlike the ISBD and REICAT, RDA deals with the concepts of *Duration*, *Illustrative content*, *Colour content* and *Sound content* not in the chapter dedicated to the description of the material, but in the seventh one: *Describing Content*. This shift towards the section of the text focused on works and expressions shows, once again, a different logical structure aimed at identifying these elements, no longer in the sphere of the manifestation but in the expression domain.

Area 6

Compared to the past, this area was renamed in the latest edition of the ISBD, expanding its scope from *Series area* to *Series and multipart monographic resource area*. This change has occurred as a result of the ISBD RG decision to leave to the library the choice about the level of granularity at which they mean to work and give it the tools to create a description coherent with other levels of descriptive depth.

This openness does not lead the ISBD to an autonomous definition of the sub-collections or sub-series as RDA does, where, with the purpose a specific marking, the following entities are defined separately: *Title proper of sub-series, Parallel title proper of sub-series, Other title information of sub-series, Parallel other title information of sub-series, Statement of responsibility for sub-series, Parallel statement of responsibility for sub-series, ISSN of sub-series* and *numbering within sub-series*. As it is in the ISBD, even in REICAT the identification of an autonomous entity for the sub-series is not retrievable. Unlike the standard in REICAT, to eliminate the arbitrary distinction between collections and sub-collections, are given the opportunity to put first

a common title and at a later stage, that of the different sections. Accordingly, the common title becomes the *main collection title*, to whom the dependent titles of one or more subsections add themselves. Finally in REICAT it is given the chance to indicate independently the sub-collection numbering, connecting it to the dependent title/sub-collection title.

The main difference in the analysis of the series area made by RDA on one hand, and the ISBD and REICAT on the other are born from a different approach to the sub-series. RDA treats them as an autonomous entity to locate and mark, while the ISBD includes them in series, not creating two logically different elements. On a similar way REICAT, in paragraph 4.6.1.2., compare the titles series to main titles and those of the sub-titles to dependent title.

Area 7

The notes area contains all the data that was not possible to debate elsewhere. For this reason, the ISBD drafters have decided to structure this section of the text following the progression dictated by the succession of the areas. REICAT, similar to the principle identified by the standard, did the same, although emerge some slight differences from the text.[8]

RDA are structured on a more complex textual architecture, in which the notes are grouped only for a small part in section 2.20, and for the rest, are traceable across the various chapters of the text.[9]

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[8] The Italian rules does not follow constantly the numbering of the areas as done by ISBD, but rather the succession of them. For this reason, paragraph 4.7.8. does not refer to the area 8, because the section about the notes on identifiers is framed in 4.7.7. Furthermore, the notes relating to specific material of the area 3, are separated with the numbering treated in 4.7.3., the notated music to 4.7.1. 4 A d) and cartographic resources to 4.7.1.8 E.

[9] In REICAT this occurs especially with regard to the notes on the relationships among the different levels of the same resource and among different resources, which are deepened in other parts of the text and not in the part devoted to the description.

At the base of this architecture there is a logical structure different from the ISBD one, able to structure a catalogue closely near to the FRBR conclusions, so often what appears in the standard as an indication notes about an one-dimensional element tied to the event, in RDA appears to be quadripartite among work, expression, manifestation, and item. Often the note, which in the ISBD and REICAT appears connected to a manifestation attribute, in RDA is in relation to each of the four different existence planes of the resource identified by FRBR. Just look in the text the proliferation of identifiers notes and the relationship centrality in the notes structure.

The focus shift from record to data resulted that the notes in RDA, rather than a practical element to describe, are "super - elements", since they are RDF data model super-properties, representing a possible record layout and no more an independent ontological entity to be defined and connected to the web.

Area 8

In the ISBD consolidated edition, area eight changes denomination going from *Standard number area* to *Resource identifier and terms of availability area*. Thus, the definition of *standard number* is abandoned in favour of *identifier*. At the core of this change there is the desire to highlight that the primary function of a standard number is to identify univocally an element. This transformation in the header area indicates the strong interest, by the ISBD RG, towards the digital semantics environment. The unique identification of the elements is indeed one of the basic elements for the creation of ontologies, because the identification numbers are alphanumeric strings built to identify a specific resource. So, this elements can be easily inserted in a semantic network. The standard identifiers defined in the ISBD glossary are:

- **ISBN** (Books)
- **ISMN** (Notated music)
- **ISSN** (Serial resources)

- **ISAN** (Audio visual resources)
- **ISRC** (Sound recording)
- **DOI** (Electronic resources)
- **Key title** (continuous resources)

Along with these elements there are: the *footprint* for older monographic resources, the *plate number* for notated music resources and the *publisher's number* for multimedia resources, sound recordings and video recordings. Alongside the ID numbers, the ISBD collocates within the area the *terms of availability*, which consist in the price and in the intended use (censorship limitations or web address indications for the retrieval of the resource).

The standard identifiers, indicated by the ISBD in the glossary and in the examples, are gathered from REICAT which explain standard numbers identified by ISO for the cataloguing world.[10]

RDA, unlike the other texts that are here analysed, has a view on a possible future[11] development, locating identifiers and standard for works, expressions, and items, in addition to the manifestation level, as already provided by the ISBD and REICAT. In today's usage there are no identifiers for other resource levels of existence, but RDA, in order to a complete conceptual cover, create a structure designed to the inclusion of these possible future creations. This decision shows, once again, a logical architecture designed to interface an environment based on a unique tagging, necessary element in the perspective of development of the semantic web. Also, as regard to the identifiers area, RDA explicit an inclination towards a new way of managing the cataloguing data, planning a future for cataloguing in which the concepts of a cataloguing record, uniform punctuation and catalogue become obsolete.

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[10] ISBN, ISRN, ISRC and ISAN are standard numbers defined by International Organization for Standardization. *REICAT*, cit., 4.8.1.

[11] Today regarding the works identifiers exists only the ISWC, International Standard Musical Work Code, widely used for music recordings.

Conclusions

From the analysis of entities treated in the preceding pages, it is clear the intention of REICAT drafters to build a completely different structure compared to that structured by the RDA JSC. The Italian rules are born at the dawn of the linked data development and are not developed to interface with them, but rather to be used in a traditional cataloguing environment. This theoretical delay is also detectable in the use of certain words, which represent the world of printed texts that now no longer appear in the lexicon of international theoretical. The persistence in the Italian text to use the terms *publication* and *header*, now almost disappeared from the international debate, is symptomatic of a perspective linked to the centrality of the printed text. In addition to the use of obsolete terminology, in REICAT we can also find a lack of definition that is not found in the other two texts.[12] Concepts such as *Main title, Title proper* and *Dependent title* are discussed without giving them a clear formulation. The definition of *Title proper and Dependent title*[13] is not clear and does not explains what they are, but indicates only how the common title can be a main title and how the dependent title can indicate a piece of text. Furthermore, in the text does not appear a clarification about the relationships between them or what makes a title, main or dependent (on the problems of identifying clear boundaries of the title proper in ISBD see Escolano Rodrìguez 2012, 79; Escolano Rodrìguez 2013). In the discussion on *material or type of resource specific area*, there are different concepts from the "scientific" realm which are not given a definition: *Projection*, *Coordinates*, *Latitude*, *Longitude*, *Right ascension*, *declination*, and *Equinox*. In RDA instead all these terms are uniquely defined, in order to make them

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[12] REICAT are the only text here analyzed that do not have a *glossary*.

[13] «The title may be composed by two parts, called the common title and a dependent title, if a publication that should be described independently has, in any order and without a grammar link, both a general title and a title or expression of any kind that specifically indicates the part or section that contains» (REICAT, 4.1.1.3 A).

sharable in a semantic organization of information. The difference between the RDA and REICAT developments RDA and REICAT emerges also from the two texts goals. The former has as aim to build «a set of guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery» (RDA), while for REICAT the goal is to provide «guidance for cataloguing *publications* of any kind and in any media and unpublished documents considered appropriate to include in the catalogue» (REICAT, 4. Italic by the Author). There are two different views of the organization of cataloguing information: on the one hand a text aimed at the creation of a traditional catalogue structured on bibliographic records, on the other hand a set of guidelines based on the aim to standardizing the information in order to create a structured metadata cloud in full connection with the web.

REICAT does not seem to have a structure fully operable with all the resources of the semantic web. RDA instead, proving to be the standard for the recording of structured metadata, break with the past and propose themselves as a new standard for the world of information retrieval, beyond the boundaries of librarian cataloguing.

In a future where «there will be even more obsolete and useless OPAC, sign of the individual system prominence» (Buizza 2010) the only RDA nowadays propose a credible option for librarian cataloguing and beyond.

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SIMONE FORASSIEPI, Master in Archival Science, Library Science and Codicology at the University of Florence. simone.forassiepi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: The paper proposes a descriptive comparison among the choices carried out by the authors of RDA and REICAT using 9 areas identified by the ISBD as a guide. Through a detailed analysis of individual choices, two different modes to understand the basics about cataloguing description and consequently also two different perspectives for future resource organization take shape. REICAT is still linked to "sheet" organization, uniform punctuation and

[14]The ISBD, RDA and REICAT basic entities mapping is available on: http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/isbd/OtherDocumentation/isbd-rda-reicat_table.pdf.

catalogue concept, while RDA outlines a new structure designed for a full data flow through a semantic platform.

KEYWORDS: Cataloguing; ISBD; linked open data; RDA; REICAT; Semantic web.

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